

SRL's SWELTERING, overworked editors cannily chose the hottest, stickiest week of the year in which to abdicate temporarily to the *Yank* entourage (I thought Joe McCarthy's *Trade Winds* was wonderful), but in the editor's absence—and ours—the mills of the literary world ground furiously. One publisher went to jail for illegal operation of Stephen Daye, Inc. (The Frederick Unger Company picked up the remaining assets for \$33,000.) Another publisher, lately turned agent, was indicted for sending "obscene, filthy, and lascivious" pictures through the mails. The package broke open in transit, the publisher presumably being too aroused to tie a knot properly. John Erskine's daughter, Anna, and Russel Crouse, author of the forthcoming "Mr. Godey's Ladies," satisfied the demands of an adoring public by getting married. Anna's father, John, promptly followed suit (the bride: Helen Worden, author of "Here Is New York"). Reynal and Hitchcock moved into swanky new quarters. Out of the Army on points, America's favorite sergeant, Bill Mauldin, told what he really thought of General Patton. The latter replied, "Hmphh! Just a mosquito bite!" In New York, meanwhile, General Eisenhower was poking Quent Reynolds's expanding stomach, exclaiming, "I see you're losing the Battle of the Bulge." The news that R. H. Macy planned a year-end move of its book department to the seventh floor—between rugs and curtains—indicating voluntary surrender of long-held Manhattan leadership in the field, sent incredulous competitors into raptures. Bruno Frank and Henry Bellamann (author of "Kings's Row") died. The mystery writers of America banded together under the slogan, "Crime Doesn't Pay—Enough." Rex Stout, speaking for the Authors' League, echoed their plaint, leveling his heaviest artillery against the publishers of twenty-five-cent reprints. Either the royalty rate on quarter books would go up materially, declared Stout, or the authors would go into the business for themselves. Bob De Graff, of Pocket Books, questioned Stout's figures, swore that he exaggerated the publishers' profits beyond all recognition. Directors of Grosset and Dunlap, figuring that the quarter-book pasture was plenty green anyhow, mulled a big-scale post-war entry into that market on their own. It promised to be a lively fall in reprint circles. Regular publishers, too, hearing intoxicating rumors of coming re-

laxations in paper controls, began squaring away for what shapes up as the most prosperous season in the history of American publishing. . . .

IT COULD HAPPEN ANY EDITION NOW

By Leo Guild

COLUMNIST WALTER O'HOULIHAN—APRIL 8, 1945. Bob Benny quips about the gent who offered a seat to a femme in the subway. She fainted. When she came to she said thank you to the gent. He fainted.

COLUMNIST JOE DOAKES—APRIL 10, 1945. That story about the guy in the subway originated in this space in April, 1897 (with the tag line left out). It was pulled by John Steinbeck's baby on Leon Henderson.

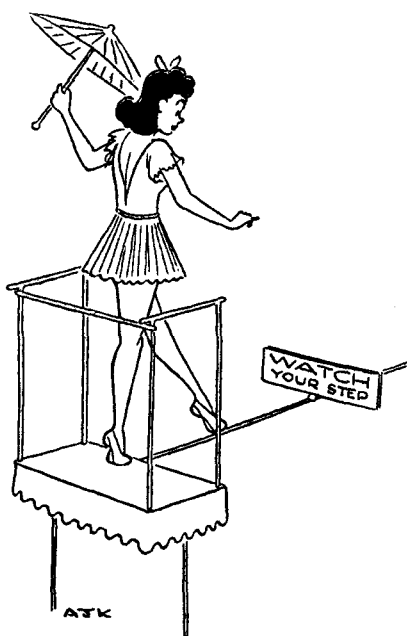
ABEL LAURIE—*Variety*, APRIL 16, 1945. The gag about the lady in the subway that two Broadway columnists claim, was introduced by Joe Thornton at the Palace in 1877, in a bill that included the Pompeii quartette and Harry Lauder's grandfather.

Skimmer's Digest—MAY, 1945. Clark Gable offered his seat to Hedy Lamarr in a Sunset Boulevard bus. She fainted. When she came to she said thank you. He fainted. . . . (Life in Hollywood Dept.).

MEMO to Skimmer's Digest EDITORS FROM JOE DOAKES: You turn out a nice little magazine and I understand you make a pretty good profit, so how about paying me the usual ten bucks for the subway story which was taken from my column?

Skimmer's Digest to JOE DOAKES: Isn't that lady-in-the-subway story pretty old, as a matter of fact? Remember what some wit once said: If you steal from one author, it's plagiarism. If you steal from a lot of authors, it's research.

JOE DOAKES to Skimmer's Digest: That's my story, too. I originated



it in my column of October 4, 1830. You now owe me twenty dollars.

EARL SLICK—MAY 14, 1945. I visited that gal from the subway in her dressing room last night, and caught her London derriere. What a bust! (34). Too much wodka no doubt (pronounced wodka).

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS COLUMN, N. Y. Sun—JUNE 2, 1945. Dear Editor: From time to time in reading the current columns and magazines I have noted a tendency for them to squabble over the origination of a joke. In particular was I interested over a recent discussion as to who originated a bon mot which has as a punch line, "— then the man fainted." For the benefit of all concerned I quote an excerpt from one of Shakespeare's essays: "A gentleman spreads the cloak so the lady may cross the puddle with feet protected from dampness. Yet no matter how often he be the gentleman in this matter she will always be surprised. And no matter how often she be the lady and thank him for this gentlemanly act he will be surprised." I hope this closes the discussion to the satisfaction of all interested parties. Signed: Thomas Simmons, Librarian.

A. P. NEWS DISPATCH—JUNE 9, 1945. Ezra Pickett, Kentucky humorist, today launched a \$100,000 plagiarism suit against Walter O'Houlihan, famous Broadway columnist, for using what he claims was an original joke created by him, intended to be the lead story of a book of anecdotes to be published soon. The story concerned a man and a woman in the subway, and appeared in Walter O'Houlihan's column of April 8, 1945.

A. P. NEWS DISPATCH—JUNE 26, 1945.—Ezra Pickett's case against Walter O'Houlihan was thrown out of court today, followed closely by Ezra Pickett. In behalf of the defendant, Arthur Garfield Ernst proved that the joke which Pickett claimed as his own had its inception at a dinner party given by Nero in 66 A.D.

WALTER O'HOULIHAN—JULY 1, 1945. Aside to Mr. Pickett. Some joke. Ha! Ha! Am I laughing!

JOE DOAKES—JULY 2, 1945. Aside to that certain Broadway columnist. Ha! Ha! Ha! As only my readers will know, I always laugh louder. Here's another scoop that will floor you. Beginning July 9, this column will appear in the *Bimbleville Falls* (N.D.) Bugle.

WESTBROOK DIXON—WASHINGTON COLUMNIST—JULY 10, 1945. Senator Wheeling told me a funny story today. He offered his seat in the Senate subway to Representative Clare Loose yesterday. She fainted. When she came to she said thank you. He fainted. . . .

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER, which shelters too many of Hollywood's most virulent reactionaries, bought Sinclair Lewis's "It Can't Happen Here" in 1936, but abandoned it when fascist customers abroad protested. Now the same studio has shelled out fifty thousand dollars to that outstanding Norwegian Quisling, Knut Hamsun, for a novel that's been kicking around for



"Ah, madam is home from the wars early this evening!"

twenty years or so. Can't somebody explain the simple facts of life to MGM potentates? . . . Trade Winds recommends these films for summer diversion: "Blood on the Sun" (in which Jimmy Cagney out-Fairbanks Fairbanks), "Thrill of a Romance," "A Bell for Adano," "Wonder Man," and "Conflict." A Warner Brothers short, "It Happened in Springfield," is worth all the features of the month put together; see it by all means. "Rhapsody in Blue" has the wonderful Gershwin melodies and a smart, arresting performance by Oscar Levant; the plot, however, is boring, interminable, and bears about as much resemblance to Gershwin's actual life as it does to Rasputin's. Coming shortly: "Weekend at the Waldorf," a rollicking 1945 adoption of the "Grand Hotel" formula, with Ginger Rogers and Lana Turner radiating almost more sex appeal than an ordinary male can take at one time. . . .

THE LATE Ambassador Dodd's porky little girl, Martha, who shocked and confounded Nazi bigwigs and lived to tell the tale in "Through Embassy Eyes," is completing her first novel for Harcourt, Brace. It is called "Sowing the Wind," and is due later in the Fall. . . . Herbert Cahn, the voice of Domesday Press, announces a competition for juvenile book illustrators, with \$6,000 in prize money. Details at One Madison Avenue, New York 10. . . .

Arthur Szyk will illustrate a new and definitive "Mother Goose" for Random House. . . . Penguin Books have discovered that the Nazi Propaganda Bureau used their exact format for a fraudulent volume called "Red Cliffs of Dover." It thundered on about the doom of the British Empire and apparently fooled nobody at all. . . . Our own Amy Loveman has been awarded a medal by Columbia University "for taking an influential part, for the last quarter century, in the interpretation of current literature." Never was a medal more richly deserved! . . . And Whitney Darrow writes from Australia: "Henry Canby made a marvelous impression everywhere over here. He did United States books and publishers a lot of good that needed doing." . . .

THERE IS A NEW BOOK on the stands called "Population Roads to Peace or War," with a postscript by Walter B. Pitkin that contains this tidbit: "While the authors of this book were correcting the galley proofs, in March, 1945, General Charles de Gaulle appointed an eight-man commission to add 12,000,000 babies to the population of France within the next decade." Mr. Pitkin always has maintained that Life Begins at Forty; what a strenuous and delectable Life he had in mind is just beginning to be made clear.

BENNETT CERF.

"From where I sit"



Karl Eskelund is a Dane but he is not gloomy. His ancestral components stemming from a Huguenot count, a Spanish deserter from Napoleon's army, some Vikings, some Danish peasants, and some Martin Luther have culminated in a young man who got bored with his ancestry and his native land and married a Chinese.

My Chinese Wife has a kind of touching devotion in KARL's thoughts about his lovely wife, Chi-yun, and simplicity of relating events which never bogs down in the realms of psychological probing. For all the muddy miles it travels, and all the miserable sights it sees, **My Chinese Wife** is a sunny book, full of the laughter of youth and the casual acceptance of extraordinary experiences.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When Sterling North and CLIP BOUTELL **Speak of the Devil** it becomes clear that they are on his side. I don't mean this to sound like a statement made in a polite parlour to add a dash of naughtiness to an otherwise stuffy evening. I say it without benefit of lorgnette and I mean that according to the scope of selections they have compiled, they apparently recognize the Devil to be a manifold character of considerable interest. Whether he horns his weaving way into the rigidity of the straight and narrow life, or merely indicates the unlimited opportunities for living to the hilt and little beyond, the Devil is someone who requires a good deal of careful study. With the assistance of such varied minds as Benét and Milton, Beerbohm and C. S. Lewis, Messrs. NORTH and BOUTELL have performed a thorough psychoanalysis, which leaves only *Salvador Dali's* jacket drawing to the imagination.



paul

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN



Seeing Things

THE ROYAL LINE

THAT it is true only heightens its strangeness. We are a nation that cannot get over our youth. We cling to it as resolutely as ever in "The Heart of Maryland" Mrs. Leslie Carter clung to the clapper of that swinging bell. So far as it is concerned, we refuse to have the curfew ring.

Although this everlasting youth of ours may not supply orators with a strong head wind, it does provide them with their favorite prevailing breeze. Yet young as we remain in our own eyes, and all too often in our actions, when it comes to our musical comedies we are apt to rely on a group of men of Cabinet, if not Supreme Court, age for our stoutest belly laughs. We have been depending upon this little group of skilful men for some time.

Ageless as our favorite clowns may be, they do not wear rompers. Young as they are in their hearts, and firm as is their hold on ours, they offer few problems to probation officers.

Victor (Throttlebottom) Moore, for example, is only five years younger than Cordell Hull. Willie Howard and Felix Frankfurter are the same age. Ed Wynn is six years older than Mr. Justice Jackson. Bobby Clark and Henry Wallace are classmates on the calendar. Jimmy Durante is Secretary Forrestal's junior by one year. Bert Lahr, who is too reticent (as beauties have the right to be) to include the year of his birth in "Who's Who in the Theatre," must be within hailing distance of Paul McNutt's vintage. This may lower his seniority, but it at least gives him the edge on Mr. Stettinius.

Although we ask much of our Elder Statesmen, we do not demand that they be funny. At least as funny as they could be. Should they try to be so, we would doubtless discourage their attempts, conscious or unconscious. We condemn them to the dignity that goes with their public office as much as with their years. Yet (and in this we see nothing strange) the men to whom our stage turns in its musicals for the frenzied business of winning laughs, are not only Elder Statesmen in their own world; some of them would be deans in any profession.

They do not seem old, except in their expertness. The proof of their skill is that time has not touched them. But, ageless as they are, we cannot hope to have them always with

us. To this extent they are mortal. Their thin ranks must some day thin. Already Joe Cook's absence is cruelly felt. This raises, even in the gay realms of nonsense, the serious question of replacements.

Several young pretenders have appeared during the past decade. To my way of thinking, however, our stage has produced in that time only one legitimate successor to the royal line. His name is Danny Kaye. Nor is it without significance that Mr. Kaye now merits discussion because of his performance in Technicolor in "Wonder Man"* rather than in person behind the footlights.

Nearly four years ago, when Mr. Kaye was delighting the town in "Let's Face It!", I wrote about his brief and astonishing career. After all, I had seen him when he first bobbed up on Broadway, two short years before, with Imogene Coca in a little number from the silo-circuit called "The Straw Hat Revue." Although this production had found favor in the hills of Pennsylvania, it did not prosper in New York. It was Miss Coca who committed the petty larceny of stealing the notices, poor as they were.

Naturally, after Mr. Kaye's rise to stardom, I consulted my *World-Telegram* files, hoping to discover what early laurels I had had the perspicacity to toss his way. To my humiliation I found that I had reported, "Mr. Kaye worked hard and well last evening in any number of capacities."

"In any number of capacities"? The horrid truth is that I have never been able to recall one of them. To my sorrow they have joined the snows of yesteryear. They have faded as completely from my memory as most of the mad things Mr. Kaye did as the swishy decorator in "Lady in the Dark" or the hairbrained soldier in "Let's Face It!" refuse to be forgotten.

Mr. Kaye in the circus dream sequence; Mr. Kaye rattling off the names of the Russian composers; Mr. Kaye pretending to be a statue in a war memorial group; Mr. Kaye turned Dracula in a bathhouse, singing a fairy tale about tomatoes, or giving, mainly in pantomime, a full account of a draftee's induction into the Army—these were all moments of such inspired insanity that even Stephen Lea-

**WONDER MAN*, a motion picture in Technicolor, produced by Samuel Goldwyn, released by R-K-O. At the Astor Theatre.



Danny Kaye, the "only legitimate successor to the royal line," teamed with Vera-Ellen in a spot of Balinese jive.

cock would have had to hail them as moonbeams from the larger lunacy.

To anyone convinced that a theatre without clowns can no more get along than civilized man can continue to get along without cooks, Danny Kaye's meteoric emergence in "Lady in the Dark" and "Let's Face It!" brought genuine encouragement. Young though he was, he was plainly a zany who had already achieved (as all clowns must) a style and stage personality of his own.

All of us then writing about the theatre tried to make clear the ways in which he differed from his elders. We pointed out that he had none of Mr. Wynn's sweet idiocy, Mr. Durante's rasping energy, Mr. Clark's terrier vitality, Mr. Cook's smiling goodness, Mr. Lahr's bullfrog noisiness, or Mr. Moore's droll pathos.

To point out differences is not to establish qualities. Although to do so is both tempting and easy, it is a negative approach, more helpful in playing Twenty Questions than in portrait painting. It may aid in clearing the way. But in terms of sculpture, it amounts to claiming that, when you have chipped off the edges of a block of marble, you have already caught the likeness of your sitter.

There were other differences, however, which demanded notice. Unlike the great clowns from the *Commedia dell'Arte* right down through Charlie Chaplin, Mr. Kaye had no uniform for laughter, immediately recognizable as his own. Unlike most of his elders, too, he did not make ludicrous what is average in the average male.

It was his energy that saved him from being precious; the fury of his attack which kept his mannerisms from being unhealthy. A nation that worships turbines realized at a glance